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ILLICIT WHISKEY-MAKING

We approach the somewhat hush-hush topic of this paper in a chaste and subdued spirit. Personally we have never distilled whiskey, either within or outside the law. We have never even visited a still in operation. Strictly sotto voce to our intimate, scholarly, purely objective audience of folklorists, we wish we had; we should be more accurate as a student of an important and widespread social phenomenon if our acquaintance with it were direct, instead of indirect. We are not even customers for the finished product. Some friends of ours are. We once by accident enjoyed (no, that's the wrong word for it) a wild night-ride, with a really prominent citizen, with two glass jugs of "white mule" between our shrinking feet. Personally we have never tasted "white mule," and probably never shall. We are afraid of the stuff. Yet perhaps, indeed, we are only an unsophisticated victim of propaganda designed to spoil the market for poor-man's whiskey. Be that as it may, we are, in this paper, opening up a topic so widespread in Tennessee life and lore that no doubt it ought to be fully explored and recorded. Though illegitimate in itself, from a legalistic standpoint, it is a legitimate phase of social life. Perhaps other members of this Society can and will, from time to time, bring to publication a wide range of material that is beyond the grasp of the present paper.

In terms of the law and of highly organized society, illicit whiskey-making is simply an avoidance of taxes. It is

the making of untaxed liquor. The Federal Government, in its concept of raising money to pay National expenses, attaches a very heavy and profitable tax to liquor-making, as it does to tobacco manufacturing and to other things. He who manufactures without paying the tax is breaking the law. Because the Government makes a strict and elaborate effort to enforce the law, he is in danger of arrest and prosecution. The penalty of conviction is rather severe, particularly beyond the first offense. Law enforcement is conducted, for the Government, by the Alcohol Tax Unit of the Bureau of Internal Revenue of the Treasury Department. Officers from this Unit, usually traveling in groups in a motor car, range widely through the country, then walk long distances back into hills and hollows. They are not in uniform, but are well known and fully recognized in the countryside as officers. They are known as "revenuers" - a purely American colloquial term. They are, needless to say, unpopular; and this seems to be true even among persons who do not make liquor. In liquor-makers' epithets they are classed with "varmits" - that is, with animals like skunks that one would not willingly associate with on any friendly terms whatever. This expressive word, "varmits," is (by the way) a king-word in a deep-country vocabulary. It speaks volumes. It is American only, and colloquial. It is a variation of vermin. It appears also in the form "varmint." It is very old; possibly as far back as two centuries ago (though a record in writing dates only from 1773) it was applied by frontiersmen to the Indians.

Today it carries the same connotation that it did to the frontiersmen. Applied to the Alcohol Tax Unit officers it expresses a definite social attitude.

The "revenuers," in their raiding, carry axes and other implements to destroy what they find. Their destruction is thorough. They make arrests if they can; but usually they cannot, for a countryman more than holds his own in a footrace, and particularly where he alone knows the paths.

Interesting examples of social cooperation exist among liquor-making people. Of these we cite two. Because Federal courts usually increase heavily the sentences they impose for successive convictions, one person frequently substitutes himself for another, up for trial, and accepts a sentence as if he were guilty, when really he is not. It would be interesting to know how many countrymen have "done time" in "Atlanta" - that is, the Federal prison there - vicariously in order to shield someone whose sentence would have been heavier. The local community seems to know the facts in such cases. Someone in it will remark casually that Bill Brown is "doing time" for Sam Smithers. What adjustments are made in recompense for such a sacrifice we do not know. There seems to be no social shame attached, in the community, to such a substitute.

Another example of cooperation consists in giving a warning. As a carload of officers, or a group on foot, passes by a home near which liquor is being made, some kind of effective warning to the workers at the still or stills will usually

be sounded. - In the country no one pays attention to a single shotgun shot, for a neighbor is probably merely getting a rabbit for dinner; but everyone pays attention to two shots, for this is a warning. There are other devices, of course. A telephone will carry a message to a point far ahead of the raiders. But in liquor-making country the people are too poor and too remote to have many telephones. In one region known to this writer, where two valleys join each other over a divide, there are good farms with telephones in the level-country outlets to each valley. These are miles apart, and there are no telephones in between. But when "revenuers" enter at either point the other is immediately notified, and an alarm is started from there. An amusing story will serve to end this phase of our discussion. A young liquor-maker who served as a lookout had an antiquated car with horn trouble. For a cause not easily perceivable his horn would on occasion blare continuously. On one short-notice occasion he drove, with this uproar, just ahead of the officers. They overtook him, stopped him, listened to his complaint, gathered around his car, peered under the hood - and were as helpless as he toward stopping the blare.

Officers raid fairly constantly. It is their purpose to prevent the manufacture of untaxed liquor. There are two ways to accomplish this. One is to imprison all the makers. The second, rather more practicable and effective, is to destroy the equipment. Liquor-makers usually are poor; the complete loss of an outfit cannot be remedied by quick replacement.

In recent times, particularly in war-time, other factors have curbed liquor-making. Sugar, a necessary ingredient, has been under strict ration controls. Copper for the worm of the still has been almost unobtainable; and to substitute galvanized iron produces a deadly liquor. There are other shortages. Even new, tight barrels are off the market. The employment of the airplane by officers for scouting also has been a blow to the industry. A wisp of smoke is readily visible to an observer high in the air. And no still can be operated without overhead camouflage to conceal it from above. Every now and then an innocent flyer, flying low, and perhaps lost and in distress, is horrified to be a target for well-aimed bullets fired from below. He does not know the background for his harrowing experience.

In any given area there are comparatively few places suitable for a location for a still. These are scouted eagerly by liquor-makers. They also come to be known, in the course of time, to the Alcohol Tax Unit officers. The task of such officers is to some extent merely "walking a beat" - that is, to drop in at irregular intervals, upon each spot known to be a potential source of trouble. The strategy of illicit liquor-making, on the other hand, is to be in and out again - in when the "revenueurs" are not there, and safely out when they are there. It is a game of hide-and-seek, with the bases around which the play occurs pretty firmly fixed. Of course there are exceptions, wholly new locations which remain secret a long time.

Everybody comes to know everybody before long. The officers know each liquor-maker and each farm in their district that habitually makes whiskey. And the liquor people identify each officer. In the district there will be some farmers who are known to everyone never to make liquor. Sometimes - indeed, often - their farms are the largest in the area. Sometimes these contain spots for stills which are a liquor-maker's dream of perfection. Yet, because their owners never make liquor, the officers tend to inspect them not often or not at all. The countryside is extensive, and tramping hill and dale is hard work.

This situation brings about a three-way set-up. A new character and a new place enter into the picture. There is also a complication in a certain law, designed to help "revenuers," which forfeits to the Government any farm used for making illicit liquor, as well as automobiles and implements. This law is, in general, not so effective as it would seem to be. A liquor-maker who lost his farm might become a squatter on it afterwards, with no taxes to pay. Social pressure would probably prevent anyone else from buying it from the Government and moving into the neighborhood. But the law hits hard a land-owner who is law abiding and responsible. If a still is surreptitiously placed on his farm, he is legally liable even if, as is likely, the courts probably would not actually assess the penalty upon him. At least, he would be embarrassed and troubled. Consequently this reputable farmer polices his acres on his own account. If he discovers a still thereon, he does not inform the "revenuers." This would be

poor neighborliness and poor social tactics if he did. Indeed, his barn might burn down, his spring be contaminated with a dead animal, or an auto tire be ruined - all with no traceable source. One keeps entirely free from cooperation with "revenuers." But this farmer does talk firmly to one of his liquor-making neighbors. Any one will do, for the word will be passed on. He says that unless everything is taken away before a certain time, set some two days ahead, he will come with his axe and smash it all. That is proper neighborliness. Silently, in the night-time, everything will disappear.

This leads us to two remarks. Night is the time for all moving of equipment and materials for liquor-making. This is not a daylight business. And, secondly, the labor involved is tremendous. Illicit liquor-making is not a lazy man's job. Silently, in the dark, over steep hillsides and in underbrush, heavy packages such as hundred-pound sacks of sugar and of grain are carried, sometimes long distances. Even rocks to build the furnace may be lugged in sacks from distances up to half a mile, if stone is not found at the place picked for the still. And the whiskey produced is carried out with the same labor. Wood for the fire may be at hand, or may be chopped at a distance and carried. The sound of wood-chopping is not a welcome note at an illicit still. And wagon tracks, when possible, might indicate saved labor, but would be a give-away to "revenuers."

We might here touch a little on vocabulary. First, moonshiner. The basis in fact for the term "moonshiner" should now be quite clear. And the meaning should have become

realistic - associated with labor, and quite stripped of any romantic aspects it may hitherto have had, such as basking lazily and perhaps with lovelorn or love-enthused heart in the mellowing light of a humanity-influencing moon. There are such people, and the moon does seem to have on some folks such an effect. But the moonshiner's moon is different. It is like a farm lantern that lights a laborer to his heavy after-dark chores - except that, unlike a farm lantern, it is not also a beacon light to inform whosoever may happen to look its way that the chores are being done. A moonshiner works secretly, surreptitiously, and therefore at night, getting whatever light for his tasks he does get only from the moon, which is a toll-tale on nobody. In the illicit-liquor industry moonshiner and its corollaries "moonshining" and "moonshine" refer to the manufacturing end of the business, not to the sales end.

The term bootlegger, on the contrary, refers to the sales end, as do its corollaries "bootlegging," "bootleg." The stiff leather cuff of a high boot, the upper part of the boot, into which trousers legs are tucked, makes a carry-all and place of concealment. What is carried is instantly within reach, but is hidden from observation. "Bootleg" has been applied, in American colloquial language, to a wide variety of objects carried in a boot-top - to gold, pistols, knives, liquor, and the like; and by extension it reaches out to cover a wide range of secreted articles and secretive business which only in a metaphorical sense have anything to do with boots. In this latter category comes the clandestine delivery of illicit liquor to furtive buyers. It also, by further extension,

is made also to cover the manufacture. We have never heard, by the way, the term "moonshining" used to indicate the sale of liquor.

We were discussing the law-abiding land-owner on whose acres an illicit distillery is sometimes secretly placed. Amusing stories have come to us about this kind of thing. One, worth giving here, came directly from a prosperous Nashville business man who owns a hilly farm in a wild section a long distance from his residence. Incidentally we may remark that an absentee-owned farm like this constitutes a moonshiner's paradise. This business man was subpoenaed into Federal Court in Nashville one day to serve as a character witness for a young countryman said by the bailiff to be on trial for moonshining. Being a kindly man he left his business, went to Court, took the witness stand, and testified that the youth had frequently worked for him on his farm, that he thought him of excellent character, and that he thought it unlikely that he would engage in illicit liquor-making. Having testified he started to leave the courtroom, then changed his mind and sat down in the back row of spectators to listen a few minutes to the rest of the trial. From the testimony he soon learned two things. One was that the distillery in question did a really thriving business. The other thing was that it was located on his own farm.

Why moonshiners should locate their manufactories on the land of law-abiding neighbors is quite plain. There are two reasons. One is that the farm, because of its owner, is not regularly suspect to the "revenueurs," and therefore the still

is less likely to be discovered than if it were on the land of a man known to make liquor. The second reason is that there is an advantage to the moonshiner if he can greatly widen the acreage the "revenuers" have to cover in their regular rounds of inspection. The wider the area the less frequent the trips to any one spot within the area; therefore the better the chance to keep a given active still unvisited.

The chief menace to moonshining is the "revenuers." Second the "revenuers" are not the preachers, teachers, reputable farmers and other law-abiding elements of the neighborhood. These may not approve, but they seldom directly interfere. The menace comes from the "trash," the human riffraff of the near and the distant neighborhood. Such may do almost anything. It has utter irresponsibility. The country word is "mean."

At its best, "moonshining" is almost respectable. But we are told that now and in recent years it is much less endurable to respectable folk than in times past. We should be interested to know definitely about this - say, what changes in attitude have occurred, in a given community, and from what causes. Probably someone could gather quite definite information on this in specific communities.

At its worst, there is no respectability or responsibility at all, for human "trash" engages in it also, and can align it with everything disreputable.

One reason that "revenuers" depend less on arrests than upon destruction of the equipment and the materials is that often the actual workers at a still are not its owners, but

only laborers paid a wage for working there. To some of the lower classes of country folk labor at a still is not very different in character from other work, although the risk involved is recognized.

There are standards in moonshining. That is, there are men and communities that take pride in enjoying a reputation for excellence. Long ago the writer learned incidentally from a city buyer of bootleg whiskey that the best liquor came from a certain named county. The man referred to that county as if it were a kind of sterling mark. From other buyers this writer has heard certain men referred to with praise. Further investigation would no doubt be interesting. Yet perhaps the results could not be fully published, because of the illegality of the manufacture. With reference to the county praised by the city buyer for its high standards this writer had also an interesting verification from within the county, a statement made by a native which clearly indicated pride.

There is a region into which this writer is (if we may use schoolgirl language) "just dying to go." He feels that way because he has been told that it is absolutely closed to outsiders. Liquor is made there. But "revenueurs" do not disturb; they simply do not enter. We inquired of the person who told us of this closed region what would happen if we really insisted - really went into it. He told us. But what he told us does not belong in our present paper.

Now a word about why people make illicit liquor. There seem to be two reasons. One, the stronger one, is economic.

The other is rugged, irrepressible individualism. The first is an endeavor to make "cash money," at least a little real "cash money," out of one's ten acres of corn grown with toil on a barren rocky farm. The second is a belief that, law or no law, one has a right to use one's crop to the best advantage one can. The Government, in making repressive laws, is an interloper. It is to be evaded, if it cannot be actively resisted. The desperate drive of poverty plus the still surviving independence of the pioneer forefathers is the combination that turns the meager corn crop into appreciable dollars, although to the financial detriment of rich old Uncle Sam.

A parallelism occurs to us. If one realizes that the issue is purely economic - avoidance of the payment of taxes - is there not, after all, a kinship between the illicit making of liquor and the juggling of accounts, suppression of facts about property, and conjuring up of exemptions which characterize the evasions of income tax and personalty and realty taxes of a large proportion of all citizens? The Tennessee State Constitution to the contrary, is there anyone present who pays to the State a three per cent tax on the cash he has on hand on January 10 of each year? The Good Book says, "Let him that is without guilt throw the first stone."

A while ago we spoke of the great labor involved in setting up and maintaining a still. We had a notion once that moonshining was romantic. We asked ourselves then what men talked about while they tended a still. We thought that maybe they sang "ballets" and behaved in other romantic folklorish ways. But now we have asked questions of people who knew.

At a still, they say, you talk just as you do when you go about any other work. But you don't talk loudly; you don't shout; of course you don't sing. Do any of our readers know anything to the contrary?

There are two more topics in our paper - first, where a still is located and second (the climax of it all), exactly how whiskey is made.

For the location of a still a long, dark, narrow hollow is more likely to be avoided than to be chosen by an experienced moonshiner. It looks suspicious. And it is a trap, with no good way of escape, if the "revenuers" come. A more open place is better, if it is out of the way and if it has a good supply of wood and water. Rocks are desirable, but these can be carried in if necessary. Wood also can be carried in. But water cannot be. The essential thing, then, is a good supply of water. This can be piped some distance. It ought to be delivered at the still about four feet high.

When the location has been selected, there is a beginning at bringing in the still. The equipment consists of about seven units. The work is done at night. On the first night perhaps only the boiler is brought in and some of the stone for the furnace.

On the next day the furnace is built. Equipped with a chimney for draft, it is made of stones plastered with mud. All the cracks are well daubed. The boiler is set into it. A furnace can be made in half a day if the materials are close at hand. It may require two days if they are not. The overhead camouflage, to guard against airplane observation, is also

begun early.

Next the barrels are moved in - the mash barrels. They are set in a pattern. There are a good many of these. Bringing them in may require two nights.

After the barrels are in place, the boiler is filled with water and a fire is started in the furnace to heat this. Into each barrel is put about half a bushel of corn meal, or rye or barley - whichever is to be used. When the water boils, about twelve gallons of it is poured into each barrel; and after this another half bushel of meal. While this is going in it must be stirred all the time. After the meal is well scalded, the barrels are covered. They are left for two days.

Two days later the operators go back and fill the barrels about two-thirds full of water. With a mash stick and with their hands they break up all the lumps that may be in the meal. The barrels are then left for three days.

After three days the sugar is put in. Whatever amount of sugar is available, up to fifty pounds, is stirred into each barrel. Then the mash is capped. It is capped with a half gallon of barley or rye meal and a half gallon of corn, rye, or barley malt.

The mash now "works" - that is, ferments. It is left for from five to ten days to do so - whatever time is necessary for it to stop fermenting and to clear up. It is now "beer."

Hardened natives drink this beer. But to an outsider it is as vile a concoction as can be thrust down a throat.

When the mash has become beer it is ready to run.

All the still has now been brought in, by night, and is in place. There are the furnace; the boiler, the thump-keg; the worm, the cooler - that is, condenser, the mash barrels, and the container for the whiskey.

The still is filled now to within about eight inches of the top. Under it the fire is started. The run is now on. The fire is only moderate, not too high. When the beer is scalding hot, the cap goes on. It is made tight by daubing the seams all around with rye paste or with thick dough.

In about twenty minutes the run begins to flow. The stream will be about the diameter of a match. It must be run until it begins to get cloudy or discolored.

The cloudy, discolored part of the run is called backins. The backins are saved and are either put back with the next run of beer or all saved until the last run of beer and then all put in and run together. If they are thus saved, this last run of beer will be the best of all.

After all the beer, in successive operations, has been run, the next step is to "proof up." To do this all the spirits are mixed together and then the liquor is gauged. If it gauges over 100% enough water is added to bring it down. It is strained thoroughly. It now is whiskey. It is ready for the market.

In winter-time the whiskey is put into containers hot, but in summer-time it is cooled.

The old "slop," the residue from the runs, is all saved and put back into the mash barrels to be incorporated into the next lot of liquor made.

How much whiskey comes from a barrel of mash? Generally a barrel with twenty-five pounds of sugar in it produces three and a half gallons of whiskey. One gallon from every twelve pounds of sugar is the maximum expectation.

Next comes the marketing. But that, it seems to us, is quite another story.

And so we close our account of a Tennessee institution.

Yet this writer knows little, and our paper says little. Let the paper be nothing final in itself, but an invitation and a challenge. What misstatements does it make? What omissions does it have? Who knows more, and can correct and add?

Moonshining has been, and still is, a center for much Tennessee folk-life. Let us gather it all while we may.

Finally, we do hope that we haven't put naughty ideas into anyone's head. "Lead not to temptation," the Good Book says - or is it a Gospel hymn?

- Charles S. Pendleton
Peabody College
November 3, 1945

GAMES WE PLAYED

The things which I shall mention in this paper will not constitute an exhaustive list of all the games we played as children, nor do I propose in it to speak with absolute authority because we played the game as our conditions permitted or as we thought it should be played. Reference in large part will be to the games we played in school. As I recall we were never at a loss for a game to play. These were composed of the rougher games for boys only, less strenuous ones for both boys and girls, and the singing games for both boys and girls.

Baseball and the ball games of "Stray Cat" and "Scrubby Nine" were usually for boys in the good old days, while some of the more venturesome of the girls would occasionally take a part. A game of "Leapfrog" could be started at a moment's notice and the rhythm of a smooth-running game of "Leapfrog" is fascinating. "Horse" and "Fox" were two of the "runningest" games we had. There were no bounds set in the game of "Fox," and so the chase often extended some distance. It was granted that foxes could climb trees, while this privilege was not granted the dogs. Horses were driven and seldom ridden in the game of "Horse." A driver might have only one horse and he might have six or eight or more. Run-aways were common. That was the horse's privilege. "Jail" was a splendid game. Here certain rules and bounds were set up and recognized. Drunkenness and fighting were the two principal offenses. "Whip-crack," "Rooster Fighting," and other games were played in this rougher list.

Some of the mixed games required a good deal of running, as "Buzzard," "Base" and "Fox in the Morning, Goose in the Evening." "Poison Stick," "Puss, I Want Your Corner," "Old Bear," "Cat and the Rat," "Going to Texas," "Rope Jumping," "Stealing Sticks," and "Whoop and Hide" were not games one could very well play sitting down. It is now interesting to notice how often the bear was used in games and tales when probably none of us had ever seen a bear at that time. Rope jumping can't be passed without some comment. Rope jumping (while maybe it should be called grape-vine jumping) offered a chance for the exhibition of individual skill in endurance, speed, and special stunts through "Rocking the Cradle," "Making up Bread," "Grinding Coffee," "Hot Pepper" and such things.

A game not so active and one affording a chance for the love-lorn to bestow slight attention was "Handkerchief." And "Marching Around the Levee" should be mentioned in this connection. One person whom I know now confesses she got a special thrill when a certain boy would kneel before her and measure his love to her.

We had a game called "Rotten Egg," It must have belonged just to our group since I don't recall having seen it played anywhere else. It took a person with pretty good grip in his hands to hold when he was being shaken by the cooks to see if he was sound or rotten.

A favorite game which was usually for boys only was a cob battle. The opposing sides armed themselves with a good supply of cobs and then the battle was on. The game usually went along all right until someone wanting to make some

special gains began using some cobs which had previously been well soaked in water. It took only a few of these to register a knock-out blow. These well-soaked cobs were to the cob battle what the present atomic bomb is to actual warfare. If they did not register a knock-out blow, they greatly decreased the distance between the opponents and some peace negotiations had to be started by someone.

The season of the year had some influence on the games that were played. There were two special seasons for most of us: Fourth of July and Christmas. The Fourth was a day at the picnic with a few glasses of lemonade and just being part of the big crowd. Christmas was a season more for games and fun. And again the special things with which to celebrate had to be improvised. A unique method for providing some inexpensive "guns" (the noise) was by the use of hog bladders. We always killed five or six hogs at home. The bladders were carefully saved by us children. After these had been well stretched by inflating and deflating and pulling, they were then "blowed" up and the ends tied and then hung up in some safe place to keep for Christmas. A quill made from the joint of a wild cane, inserted in the neck of the bladder with plenty of breath to blow, did the trick of blowing up. If we forgot which end of the quill went in the mouth, little damage was done. Anyway, all of the blowing was probably unconsciously developing our lungs. On Christmas morning the bladders were taken down and "busted." This "busting" was accomplished by using the back of an ax or by the use of a plank. The noise was really surprisingly loud. So we were well paid for all our trouble. And

I'm still wondering why someone did not write a song on "When It's Bladder Busting Time in the Country" and become famous.

With no thought of irreverence or mockery, "Big Meeting" was a favorite game during the late summer and fall when the protracted meetings around were in progress. We now talk about religious unity, but then was the only time I have ever seen it demonstrated so perfectly. All believed the same things: being mourners, "getting" religion and shouting, and then being immersed in a pile of leaves prepared for the occasion. And evidently all believed in falling from grace since everyone present had to "get" religion each time there was preaching. The singing for these services was interesting in a way. All sang - and how they sang! With nothing said about the matter, it was easy to detect ones singing like every person in the community who had any peculiarities when singing. Sometimes arbors would be made for these meetings, but they were usually held out under some big tree.

Even though we had the show of religious zeal, it was nothing uncommon for us to break out with some play-party game. "Skip to My Lou" was the favorite. At one particular time our changing from "if I can't get a red bird a blue bird will do" to a substitution of well-known names of people in the community for the red bird and blue bird brought an end to our playing. A good neighbor heard our version of the song and piously reported the same to the teacher with a request that the game be stopped. We never did appreciate this interference.

Other singing games were "Green Gravel," "Draw a Bucket of

Water," "Frog in the Mill Pond," "Chick-a-my-Craney-Crow," "Needle's Eye," and such. "Needle's Eye" always turned into a tug-of-war, the point of the game being to win this pull. "Frog in the Mill Pond" could be played by any number and was played often. Some of these games were used more as a chant than a song.

Swings were always in season. "Swinging in the Grape-Vine Swing" wasn't just so much poetry to us. But the swings were not the only rides we had. Most every sapling around the school house was converted into a "ride-a-horse" when this riding fever would break out. It was nothing uncommon for the rider to be thrown, but the riding continued just the same.

I have never heard anyone attempt to say just what it takes to constitute a game. So it is presumed that making bark horns; whistles, pop guns, squirt guns, and bark whips constituted games. It was nothing uncommon for a group of boys to take off to the woods on a spring day after the sap was flowing well and return in due time with the noise that can be made only by the blaring of bark horns, the shrill sounds of newly made whistles, and the crack of hickory-bark whips. There was an art in making all these as there was in making pop guns and squirt guns. And here mention should be made of the bows and arrows that were made at other times. This required skill and also required a knowledge of the best kinds of wood to be used.

Singing was made a game and especially used on bad days when the more active games could not be played. There was

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Singing was made a game and especially used on bad days when the more active games could not be played. There was

some group singing, but in large part it consisted of "special" numbers. Two of my cousins especially liked a version of "The Old Bachelor," one playing the part of the bachelor and the other the young maid as they sang -----(use song). Then someone might answer with "I'm Determined to Be an Old Maid." One girl, no doubt due to her relations with life, sang more of the "sad" songs. And so she would give her version of "Little Omie." My special contribution would be "Frog Went a-Courting." I learned these special words and the tune from an old lady, a neighbor of ours, who would sing for me. One older person had a number of songs in his collection, as "Sir John Came Down the Hollow." Maybe to show his contempt for all the singing, or to show that he could make a contribution, some boy might leave the group loudly yelling "Negro Whoop."

There were some few games played largely when we went to spend the night with someone or had visitors in our own home. These include "Club Fist," "William Trembletoe," "Simon Says Wig - wag," "Chick-a-My-Craney-Crow," "Fish," "Going Down South," "Blind Fold," "Texas Grant," "Tea Kettle," "Thimble," and others, with telling tales and telling riddles added. It was redeeming the pawns in "Thimble" that brought the most fun to that game.

And now that a few years have passed since I played these games as a child, I may think differently regarding them than they really were. But I do believe we were happy and contented in playing these games. And I am not sure that present-day conditions are an improvement along this line.

- Robert Lassiter

February, 1946

Dear Friends:

Greetings! To the members and friends of the Tennessee Folklore Society who have given so much of their time and energy for the good of our organization, I wish to express my deepest appreciation.

My hope is that the first peacetime New Year in half a decade will find us able to achieve vastly more in collecting and preserving the great amount of rapidly vanishing lore of our state.

In our Sesquicentennial year should we not redouble our efforts?

Sincerely,

Mrs. Flora L. McDowell, President
Tennessee Folklore Society

REVIEWS OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Gib Morgan, Minstrel of the Oil Fields, by Mody C. Boatwright: The Texas Folklore Society, 1945

This latest in the series of fascinating publications by the Texas Folklore Society opens up a fascinating new vein of folklore - that dealing with the oil industry.

That so colorful an industry should have its own semi-legendary hero is only to be expected, for have we not Paul Bunyan in lumbering, Mike Fink in keel-boating and John Henry of the section gangs? So Mr. Boatwright presents to us Gib Morgan "- both hero and poet, a scop who wore no man's livery, flattered no master, celebrated no deeds but his own."

The book is divided into two parts: The Life Gib Morgan Lived, and The Tales Gib Morgan Told. The tales, in particular, are really something. In them you meet Big Toolie, who was so tall he could grease the crown pulleys standing on the ground; Torpedo, the wonderful horse twenty-two yards long (you never turned him; you just put him in reverse); Gib's greyhound, who could run on three legs and still keep up with a train going a hundred and fifty miles an hour; and Strickie the snake, whom Gib used instead of a drilling cable. You read of wondrous wells, such as the one in the Fiji Isles, which was supposed to yield essence of peppermint, but which first ran buttermilk and later champagne. There was also a whiskey well, but this was in South America.

All this gives just a mild idea of Gib's adventures. You'd better read the book for yourself.

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The second volume of Paul Flowers' Greenhouse turned up on this desk after the December issue had, as we say somewhat euphemistically, gone to press. Thus, although the little book is dated November, 1945, our review is some three months late, but it is our private opinion that The Greenhouse is only too capable of surviving this seeming neglect.

This time the cover bears a delightful portrait of some spotted lilies, while the inner cover bears an equally delightful portrait of Mr. Flowers himself. The foreword is by Harnett T. Kane, author of Plantation Parade and Louisiana Hayride.

The contents include the same mixture of anecdotes, home-grown poetry, sketches, and bits of folklore that distinguished the first volume. While none of the sketches (in the opinion of this reader) quite hit the high of the one about Kitty and the Attic Fan in the first volume, we still liked "Kindergarten Commencement," "Peavine Excursion," and "Oft in the Stilly Night" a lot.

We hope that there will be many more Greenhouses to brighten our days in the coming years.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

It is gratifying to note the new interest among the countries of South America in their own folklore. Two recent manifestations of this interest have come to our notice since the publication of the December issue of the Bulletin.

The first of these chronologically is the Folklore Society of Uruguay, founded April 18, 1945. Their first publication is a pamphlet telling of the founding of the Society and giving its constitution. In addition it contains information presented to the Congress of Latin American Cultural Institutions by the Commission of American Folklore, and a set of suggestions for the collection and preservation of folk items. Incidentally, these suggestions are the same as those drawn up for the University of Santo Domingo by Ralph Steele Boggs.

The Republic of Argentina formed a Commission of Folklore the fifteenth of last September. It is affiliated with the National Council of Education, and it intends to collect the following classes of material:

- a. Legends, fables, tales, imaginative stories, etc.
- b. Traditional rites, superstitions, magic, etc.
- c. Proverbs, refrains, general phraseology
- d. Popular rhymes
- e. Children's games and songs
- f. Music, songs, and dances
- g. Evidences of folklore in the many manifestations of national life
- h. Folklore in daily life

The first pamphlet put out by the new commission is called "Folklore y Nativismo en la Enseñanza Primaria," by Dr. Ataliva Herrera, of the National Council of Education.

* * * * *

Perhaps many of our readers did not know that there is a French Folklore Society in America. There is, and it is nearly ten years old. For the past four years it has published a Bulletin, which comes out eight times a year. Last October this Bulletin appeared for the first time in printed form, and a very handsome little magazine it is.

In addition to the publication of the Bulletin, the Society has also put out three series of pamphlets, gives an annual concert each spring in New York, and sponsors lectures, recitals, and exhibits in the field. There are also several song and dance groups affiliated with the Society, which from time to time appear on radio or television programs.

Membership fee for the Society, which includes subscription to the Bulletin, is one dollar a year. Those of our readers who are interested in the Society or its publications should address the French Folklore Society, 320 West 86th Street, New York 24.

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Added to our exchange library is the second part of Volume 54 of the Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society.

In addition to the usual reports of business matters, the volume contains the articles "General Ashley and the Overland Trail," by Donald McKay Frost, and "The First Salem Voyage to Japan," by James Duncan Phillips.

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Membership fee and subscription to the Bulletin,
one dollar a year.

It is with sadness that we note the death of Professor Neal Frazier of Murfreesboro. Professor Frazier was a charter member of the Society and several times served as one of its vice presidents.

Though his death occurred in late November, notice of it reached this office too late for the December issue. Since the last issue of Volume 12 will approximate the anniversary of his death, present plans call for a complete memorial to him at that time.